

I don't believe any American President has ever come to Russia five times before. I came twice before that, once when I was a very young man and our relations were very different than they are now. All my life, I have wanted the people of my country and the people of your country to be friends and allies, to lead the world away from war toward the dreams of children. I have done my best to do that.

I hope you will believe that that is the best course for both our countries and for our children's future.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:10 a.m. in Plenary Hall at the Duma. In his remarks, he referred to President Vladimir Putin and former President Boris Yeltsin of Russia. The President also referred to OSCE, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

Exchange With Reporters Aboard Air Force One

June 5, 2000

Sightseeing

The President. Did you guys go see Lenin?

Q. We tried; we couldn't get in.

The President. I'll tell you something, if you've never been to Kiev and you have time while we're there—if you don't all have to cover me all the time, when we're just having meetings and stuff—you should go to the monastery, all these beautiful buildings where they have all the historical treasures of Ukraine, all these—these metal artifacts going back over a thousand years, fabulous stuff—2,000, 3,000 years.

And underground—they have this underground network of tunnels that the priests still run. And the tunnels are perfectly preserved atmospherically, and there are mummies there where the priests have been buried for 500, 600, 700 years, and they're like that, and you can see the skin on their hands, just like Lenin, except not treated. No, no, they were just buried there. It is the most astonishing thing.

Remember how that Peruvian—wasn't it a Peruvian girl—looked when they found her after 500 years in the ice?

Q. Yes.

The President. That's the way the atmosphere is. And you're walking through these tunnels, and you just come up and there's a little grave. They just cut a thing into the tunnel and they lay the priests there. I mean, there they are. It is the most astonishing thing. Who did it? Weren't you amazed? Weren't they all buried 500, 600, 700 years ago?

Q. Yes.

The President. And you hold the little candle down there. And the atmosphere is stunning. But like a group of you, if you can whatever, swap off—because a lot of this stuff is just meetings until we do the rally. There's no press conference or anything. As many of you as can be spared—there is nothing like it anywhere else in the world that I'm aware of.

Q. Would you write a note for our bosses?
[Laughter]

Former President Boris Yeltsin of Russia

The President. Yes, I'll give you an excused absence. But no kidding, if there is any way any of you can go, you should go. It is a truly extraordinary thing. It's amazing. Yeltsin looked good today.

Q. Did he?

The President. Yes. He's in good spirits, happy. He's got a beautiful place.

Q. Which spirits, exactly?

The President. No spirits. [Laughter] He and his wife and his daughter were there. We all just had a nice visit. It was like old times. But he's in good shape.

NOTE: The exchange began at 2:17 p.m. en route from Moscow, Russia, to Kiev, Ukraine. In his remarks, the President referred to former President Yeltsin's wife, Naina, and his daughter, Tatyana Dyachenko. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks on Signing a Ukraine- United States Joint Statement in Kiev, Ukraine

June 5, 2000

Thank you very much. Mr. President, Mr. Prime Minister, leaders of the government, leaders and Members of the Rada, leaders